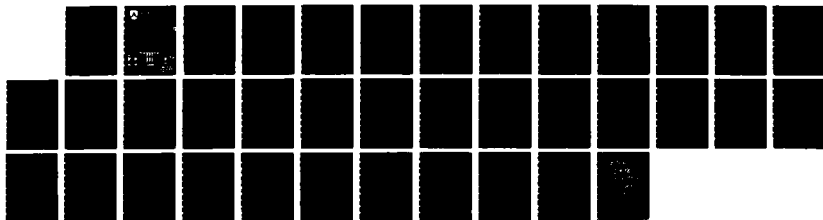
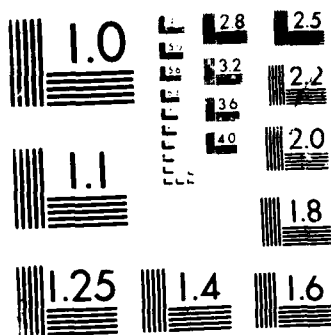


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# AIR WAR COLLEGE

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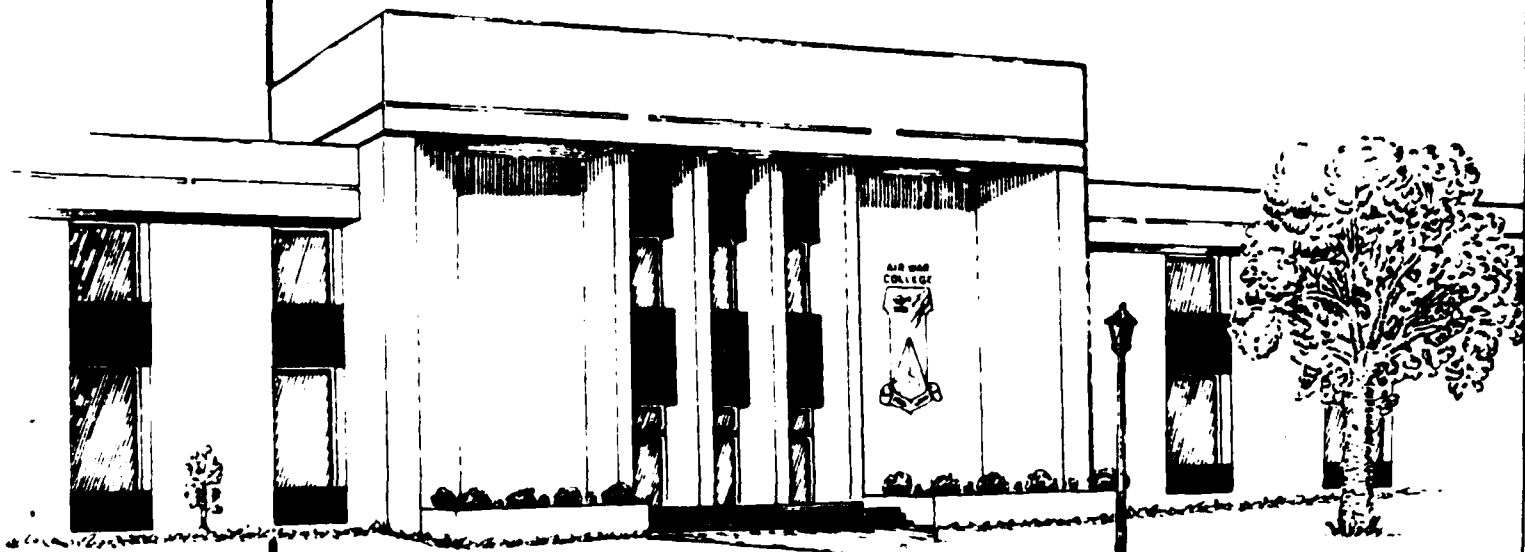
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THE DILEMMA OF AN ALLY

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By COLONEL AURELIO J. CANTOS, PHILIPPINES AIR FORCE



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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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## THE DILEMMA OF AN ALLY

Aurelio J. Cantos  
Colonel, PAF

**Thesis Advisor: Colonel Bruce S. Goodhue**

•March 1987

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#### DISCLAIMER-ABSTAINER

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Aurelio J. Cantos is an active member of the regular component of the Philippine Air Force, Armed Forces of the Philippines. Most of his years in the service has been spent with air operations. He held various positions and assignments in the Air Force and had been a member in one time or another of varied committees up to the General Headquarters level. From 1982 to 1985, Colonel Cantos worked with Headquarters, Philippine Air Force as the Executive Officer to the Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Operations (A-3). While in that position, he acted as Chairman of the PAF Permanent Working Group which prepares the yearly operating program of the Air Force. He simultaneously served as a member of the PAF Weapons System Study Group and the Command Force Capability Development Study Committee. He spent a single duty tour with the 220th Airlift Wing for almost seven years flying airlift missions all over the country. His last assignment was Chief Division Staff of the 1st Air Division, which is in charge of air defense mission of the PAF and supervises CASFs I to V in support to RUCs I to V operations.

Colonel Cantos belongs to the AWC class of 1987.

AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: The Dilemma of an Ally

AUTHOR: Aurelio J. Cantos, Colonel, PAF

— The report practically reveals the strength and weaknesses of an ally's air capability. It describes its previous records and how it stands today in performing its role of supporting its government in the fight against insurgencies in the Philippines. A depiction of some difficulties it is facing today and it has faced before which affect its effectiveness as a tactical organization is discussed. This is correlated to the probable type of conflict it is facing in the years to come. In the end, suggestion was made in some areas where it can improve its posture to help the Armed Forces of the Philippines in fighting the war against communist insurgencies.

A message is being delivered so that in case of future intervention the United States can study and understand first the problem of a poor country and will not fall into the same "trap" that it did similar to the situation in South Vietnam.





## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the past, nobody has criticized the PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE and the shortcomings of its operations. While the PAF has had several successes, it had also incurred failures and flaws in its past operations. There are problems which had been in existence for quite sometime and which had been handed down from one Commanding General to another.

This paper is presented in an attempt to identify the more serious problems plaguing the operations of the PAF particularly the role it play in support of the surface forces and the possible measures which can be taken to alleviate these problems.

The first chapter gives a historical background depicting the previous successes of the PAF. This is followed by a discussion of current PAF capability and the important role it assumes in support of the Armed Forces campaign against the communist guerrillas.

The problems are enumerated and discussed in Chapter IV focusing on logistics, security and intelligence, command, control and communications, divisiveness among the ranks and the inadequacy of doctrines.

In the succeeding chapter, the author speculates on what kind of conflict can be expected in the near future.

Finally, the author attempted to discuss possible solutions with emphasis centering on the abolition of the Composite Air Support Forces or CASFs. In its place, creation of Task Forces is recommended.

The author then concluded by reiterating his purpose and summarizing the major points which he discussed.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Philippine Air Force (PAF) plays a key role in the government's campaign against insurgency currently occurring in almost the whole Philippine archipelago. The fragmental state of the country which is composed of no less than 7,100 islands greatly necessitates mobility for the troops to respond immediately to situations anywhere at any moment and the PAF is the only effective organization the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) relies upon to carry such responsibilities.

The insurgency problem has grown into a magnitude which now threatens the security of the state. From a few hundreds in the early 70's the New people's Army or commonly called the NPAs are now estimated to have more than 20,000 armed followers scattered throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> This does not include yet the mass base that they influence.

Aside from the communists insurgents, the government is also faced with Muslim secessionist movements in the South (Mindanao, Sulu, and Palawan provinces). At present, there are two armed factions operating against government forces. The original group, the Moro National Liberation Front or the MNLF, had been in existence since the early 70's is led by Nur Misuari who just returned recently from several years of self-exile in Libya. While in Libya, he procured arms and ammunition which through clandestine means made their way to this constituents in the provinces in the South. Not so long ago, Misuari and his group concluded a "ceasefire" or in his own term "a temporary cessation of hostilities", with the Aquino government and would prepare to negotiate under the auspices of the 46-member Islamic Conference of Nations.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kirk, Donald, New Battle for the Philippines, The NEW LEADER, Oct. 20, 1986. Vol. LXIX, No. 15, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Asiaweek, Sept. 14, 1986, p. 10-11.

The other group, which is a newly formed faction, is the Moro Islamic Liberation Front or MILF. This group of rebels is led by Hashim Salamat, who is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. His representative in the Philippines is the MILF council vice-chairman Al-Haj Murad. They are demanding audience with the President because they alleged that they are being left out in solving the problems in the South. Most of the followers of the MILF come from the Central and Northern Mindanao provinces.<sup>3</sup>

When the Armed Forces focussed its attention to the problem in the South, security problems in other parts of the country grew. The NPAs took this opportunity to strengthen its base and intensify its recruitment and cadre training, particularly in the Northeastern Luzon and the Visayan island provinces. They capitalized on the alleged abuses and atrocities labeled against government troops especially during the Martial Law days. (Martial Law was declared by Ex-President Marcos on September 21, 1972 when he signed Presidential Proclamation 1081). During the Martial Law period, anybody suspected of committing subversive activity or rebellious acts against the government is arrested and detained even without specific charge. Aside from the abuses committed by the military, the fast declining economic conditions throughout the country remained unchecked. This aggravated the situation and contributed greatly to the campaign being waged by the communist insurgents in winning the sympathy of the people on their side particularly in the depressed areas of the country.

Suddenly, the military is faced with a growing insurgency problem all over the country. The territorial forces, composed of policemen and Constabulary troops and para military units were ineffective in containing the spread of

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<sup>3</sup>Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Jan. 17, 1987, p. 1.

insurgency. The NPAs, on the other hand, intensified their efforts in collecting firearms and ammunitions by all means possible. They raided small military detachments in remote areas and staged lightning raids of municipal halls and police headquarters carting away firearms and some communications and office equipment. They were successful in most of their raids because they have developed an effective intelligence network in their respective area of operations. They normally conduct raids in groups of 100 to 200 during holidays and weekends when very few policemen are around and they case their target carefully before striking. They never stay long in the area, they leave the moment they have what they want. They screen the area properly with teams positioned in the directions where possible reinforcements can come from. They position ambush teams where reinforcements are expected to pass. They usually ambush troops on vehicles along remote routes but not far from populated places. After accomplishing their task, they disperse into small groups either towards forested or mountainous terrain or towards a populated area where they mixed with the civilians and regroup later. In this manner, the pursuing government troops could hardly detect them.

This modus operandi of the insurgents enable them to acquire additional arms and ammunitions to sustain their struggle against government forces.

The inability of the local police forces and the constabulary to check the growth of insurgency in the country prompted the military high command to adopt a new approach and this is the creation of the Regional Unified Commands or the RUCs. The RUC concept jibes with the political set-up of the country and it aimed to consolidate military forces and its efforts in combating the insurgents under the direction of a single individual, the RUC Commander. In all, fourteen RUC headquarters were established to include the National Capital Region (METRO MANILA). The boundaries of each political region define the area

of responsibilities ACR) of each RUC.

While the RUC concept consolidated the ground forces under one commander, it scattered the meager resources of the PAF which in turn created some problems particularly in logistics and command and control. These will be discussed in the later in chapter IV.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PAF AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN COUNTER INSURGENCY

#### A. Flying Units of the PAF.

At present, there are eight flying units in the PAF. Five of these units are actively engaged in supporting surface forces tactical air requirements. The 205th Helicopter Wing provides troop mobility in the field with their UH-1H and Bell 205 helicopters. Most of these helicopters are equipped with M-60 machine guns mounted on each side. The Wing has two operational helicopter Squadrons supported by a maintenance and a supply squadrons. The Wing operates all over the country. About 28 to 30 helicopters are deployed at any given time to support RUC operations. The Wing headquarters is located at the Villamor Air Base in Metro Manila.

The 15th Strike Wing, a counter-insurgency dedicated unit of the PAF, maintains and operates the T-28s, the S-76 Sikorsky helicopters, and the German-made BO-105 helicopters. Their primary mission is to provide close air support and armed reconnaissance. In addition, the Wing is tasked with the search and rescue mission of the PAF. Despite its being the youngest tactical unit of the PAF, the 15th SW has earned the distinction of being the most decorated combat unit of the PAF.

Another unit which used to provide close air support to the ground forces before the creation of the 15th SW is the 5th Fighter Wing. This unit operates jet fighter aircraft such as the F-5 Freedom Fighters, the F-8H Crusaders and the T-33s. While they are tasked primarily with air defense, they can be called upon to perform tactical air support missions. Some of the F-8Hs are presently deployed at Puerto Princesa Air Base in Palawan to provide air support in the defense of the Kalayaan islands. (The Kalayaan islands is part of a group of small islands west of Palawan presently being claimed by a group of countries

in Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Malaysia and the Philippines).

Other tactical units of the PAF are the two airlift wings namely: the 220th Airlift Wing, which is stationed at Mactan Air Base, Cebu and the 240th Composite Wing at Sangley Air Force Base, Cavite.

The 220th AW carries the brunt of the airlift missions of the AFP using C-130s, L-100-20s, Friendship Fokker F-27s and the Australian N-22B Nomads. In addition, the three F-27 Maritime aircraft flies reconnaissance and patrol missions over the country's territorial waters.

The 240th Composite Wing operates the BN Islanders. Most of these aircraft are deployed to the different RUCs primarily as command and control ships of RUC Commanders in the conduct of operations within their AOR.

The PAF has a Photo-reconnaissance unit but they use the air assets of the 220th AW when they fly their missions. The most commonly used equipment are the F-27 Maritime version and the N-22B Nomads.

#### B. Importance of the PAF in counter-insurgency.

If we look back several years ago, the Philippine Air Force proved its worth when it played a big role in crushing the "Huk" movement in Central Luzon during the 1950s. Using P-51 Mustangs, they bombed and strafed the dissidents hideouts in Central Luzon which finally broke the bone of the rebels. In a similar fashion, the Air Force saw action again in the early 70s at the height of rebel activities in the South. The rebels dreaded the fire power capability of the PAF. The Commanding General at that time practically commissioned all his air assets to be employed in the campaign against the secessionist movements in Mindanao. He ordered the installations of gun mounts, bomb racks, and rocket launchers in most types of aircraft for offensive operations against the rebels. He, himself, flew armed C-47 missions over hostile territories armed with bombs and machine guns.

The slow-flying L-20 Beavers were rigged with 30-caliber machine guns under its wings and proved to be very effective against motorized boats used by the rebels plying river routes. This earned them the dreaded title of "banca busters" (banca is the local name for wooden boats).

At the start of the campaign in the South, the PAF employed F-86Fs and F-5As for close air support and interdiction of enemy strongholds. The F-86Fs were based in Zamboanga Air Base while the F-5As operated from Mactan Air Base in Cebu, some 200 nautical miles north of Zamboanga. Later on, the T-28s were employed which proved to be more effective than the jets. The T-28s were better known as the "Tora-Toras" both to the government forces and the enemy. They assumed the primary role of close air support.

The campaign in the South could have been ended decisively had it not been for the political decision to use air power sparingly. There was a period during the conflict wherein the use of lethal weapons such as fire bombs or Napalm bombs and air munitions heavier than 1000 pounds had to be cleared from the Office of the President before being dropped. This resulted to more casualties suffered by government troops because targets which could have been destroyed by air strikes were permitted to exist such as fortifications, bunkers, ammunition cache, and other enemy positions. Further yet, it caused demoralization not only among the airmen but also the troops fighting on the ground.

As political influence played its more dominant role, the intensity of hostilities slowly decreased in the years that followed. Air Force assets were reduced little by little in the area. The offensive weapons like the T-28s and other armed aircraft were returned to their home bases. Only the helicopters and some utility aircraft remained in the area. A number of T-28s were kept for sporadic close air support missions and reconnaissance flights. In most cases, the missions assigned to them were "persuasion flights", sort of show of force to discourage the enemy from harassing government troops in the area.



The decision to reduce the air offensive against the rebels proved detrimental to the ground troops. There were more ambushes. Rebel training camps flourished and the enemy enjoyed more freedom of movement. In effect, they were given the opportunity to regroup and consolidate their positions.

Another major role that the PAF provide to the AFP is airlift. In the 60s and early 70s, the C-47 was the workhorse of the PAF in ferrying troops and supplies. With the acquisition of the C-130s, the PAF developed the capability to airlift an Army or Marine Battalion with its basic loads from one place to another any time in a matter of hours. As soon as the C-130s land, the troops are flown to their area of operations by means of helicopters.

The helicopters are the most sought vehicle in the field because of the mobility and flexibility it provides to the Commander and his troops. These helicopters are mostly used to perform re-supply, evacuation of sick and wounded, extrication of pinned down troops, escorting convoys, reconnaissance missions and sometimes commander's command and control ship. They are normally mounted with M-60 machine guns on both sides with gunners.

The introduction of the armed S-76 Sikorsky helicopters in the recent years added to the close air support capability of the PAF. The S-76 blend effectively with the T-28s during air strikes. They can serve as platform for forward air controllers (FAC) in directing the T-28s to their targets. By firing rockets with white phosphorous materials, they can mark targets with accuracy. The S-76s are also used for strafing because they are equipped with 20mm guns and 50-cal. machine guns.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROBLEMS OF THE PAF

#### A. Indiscreet use of resources.

The activation of the RUCs gave the Air Force a big problem due to scarce resources. It just do not have enough air assets to meet the requirements. This shortfall is compounded by requests from other sectors of the government especially government officials and administrators actively involved in government development projects throughout the country. More often than not, commanders in the field were deprived of the valuable use of aircraft because priority were given to satisfy the needs of the people close to the powers that be. During the previous administration, political kingpins close to the President cannot be refused by the Air Force every time they request for aircraft. Of the average six F-27s in-commission, only one can be available for military operations, sometimes not even one. The rests are designated aircraft for VIP (very important person) use. When there is a scheduled movement by the the President or the First Lady, Malacanang\* controls all the flights and once the aircraft are assigned to support the movement, the Presidential Security Command operations controls them exclusively. The only time they can be made available is when the party has completed its backloading. It is always the case that when the former President and or the First Lady move, they are accompanied by an entourage of guests and aides not excluding the advance party, the main security and even the kitchen and households. Even Limousines and back-up vehicles are ferried by C-130s. Due to the extravagance of the previous administration, operations of the PAF was hampered. Some of the assets of the PAF were left unattended in terms of maintenance and spare support

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\* Malacanang is the official residence and office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines.

due to extra attention given to VII aircraft. Other leaders capitalized on PAF aircraft to build their image and maintain strong support from among their political constituents at the expense of the troops in the field.

As mentioned earlier, the helicopters are the most demanded transportation in the field because they can be used practically in any type of terrain. They provide flexibility to the commanders in the field. But somehow, quite a number of commanders made use of these helicopters as if they are their own private vehicle. Some post operations reports from Composite Air Support Force (CASF) commanders revealed that at times, there were more administrative missions flown compared to combat and combat support missions. There were even cases where RUC commanders flew home during weekends using these aircraft assigned for their operational use. Some pilots do the same.

#### B. Logistics problem.

As had been pointed out earlier, the PAF is very much wanting in its capability to support the requirements of the RUCs. To show its presence in the region, the PAF organized the CASF under each RUC. The CASF commander, a rated officer, acts as the air advisor to the RUC commander and is the direct representative of the PAF in providing air support to the ground forces in the area where he is assigned. He is also responsible for the management and control of air force resources in the area, the most critical of which is aviation fuel.

The Philippines practically imports all the oil it needs from other countries. Because of the worldwide economic recession and the consequent devaluation of the Philippine peso, oil importing capacity of the country declined. The PAF, an oil consuming agency of the government, felt it very badly in its operations. The same effect was felt in procuring aircraft spare parts. Among the four major services in the AFP, the PAF has the lowest budget, despite its being technically oriented and equipment intensive. In a span of

three years (1983 to 1985), the programmed flying time of the command spiralled down to 50%. Traditionally, a large portion of the PAF budget is set aside to satisfy the fuel requirements and spares support needed to generate the programmed flying time annually. With the high cost of flying and constraints on the budget, the PAF was forced to cut down its yearly program. The reduction in flying time had its toll down the line. Helicopter utilization in the field went down to as low as 25 hours for one quarter or barely eight hours a month. Of the six C-130s, only two can be supported logistically. Most of the aircraft remained sitted on the ground, their tanks cannot even be filled up with fuel. Troops engaged in operations and training had a hard time getting air support. Helicopters range of operations were greatly reduced because fuel prepositioning became more expensive. Drumming of fuel became costly. Administrative flights were scheduled to the minimum and training and proficiency flights declined. To a certain extent, I would say safety was jeopardized.

#### C. Communications problem.

One big drawback in operations is the non-compatibility of communications between the aircraft and the ground troops. For example, T-28s cannot communicate directly with the troops on the ground because its airborne communication is not compatible with that of the radios which the armies are using. The advent of the S-76 Helicopters in the field somewhat alleviate the problem because they can relay messages from the T-28s to the troops and vice versa. When this is not possible, they result to visual signals put up by ground troops to indicate possible targets. Because of poor communications, command and control is not so effective. There had been reported cases whereby targets were missed or wrong targets were hit due to faulty communications. This problem had been realized for quite sometime but nothing had been done so far.

#### D. Poor intelligence.

The PAF has not developed an effective air intelligence capability. Very

seldom do pilots get briefing from intelligence people before they fly their missions. Information concerning the enemy are not available most of the time. Their use of assets are not so effective because they cannot even provide pilots with estimate of enemy strength, locations, movements and other activities. Intelligence personnel lacks training particularly in determining enemy capability.

Very few air reconnaissance missions are being conducted by the intelligence people. Taking photographs of terrains where enemy activities are suspected to be taking place are not conducted extensively. I have flown several missions in the South and in almost all places in the country, without the benefit of receiving any intelligence briefing prior to take-off.

Because of inadequate intelligence information, the helicopter units devised their own unit policy of flying with a "buddy" (at least two ships in a flight) over suspected hostile territories or else, if only one aircraft is dispatched, a diversionary route is established. In both cases, the mission becomes more expensive. Commanders with only one helicopter assigned to them will have to go the long way or take the risk of being shot at over hostile territory.

#### E. Inadequate security.

With weak intelligence, definitely security is threatened. If fighting will escalate and the enemy will be bold enough to conduct simultaneous attacks on all CASF locations, all the aircraft in the area are sitting duck targets. Most of the deployed air assets especially helicopters are left in the open. A single shot from a grenade launcher can easily knock it out. Many aircraft have been destroyed by typhoons simply because they were not properly secured and sometimes through the negligence of the crew and the people responsible for their security. In the same manner, fixed-wing aircraft are very much susceptible to sabotage and surprise attacks. Most of them are left unattended on local airports and airstrips. Surprisingly, the insurgents have not resorted to sabotaging aircraft in the field.

Unfortunately, the CASF commander could only do so little to protect his air assets. If he has the proper rapport with the RUC commander, he can rely on the troops in the area to secure his aircraft or else he has to utilize his personnel and the crews with their small arms. His alternative is to order the pilots to evacuate the aircraft as soon as possible, but that can be done if they have the chance to do so.

The present strength and capability and boldness of the enemy should be enough indications for authorities to worry and undertake some anticipative measures before some surprise could occur.

#### F. Leadership and Factionalism in the service.

Presently, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is confronted with divisiveness and factionalism among officers and enlisted personnel as well. No less than Defense Minister Rafael Ileto admitted that: "there is a division within the Armed Forces of the Philippines." He also confirmed that "there are still officers and enlisted personnel in the AFP loyal to the deposed President Marcos."<sup>4</sup> This was demonstrated by the three unsuccessful coup attempts staged by loyalist troops, the latest of which happened last January 27, 1987, when some 400 to 500 disgruntled officers and men together with the Marcos loyalists tried to take over two Air Bases and a radio-television station within the National Capital Region. These two air installations (Villamor Air Base and Sangley Air Force Base) became targets because these are where the helicopters and the T-28 combat aircraft are based. For a while, the group which attacked Sangley Air Base was successful. They held hostage for seven hours the 15th Strike Wing commander and his deputy.<sup>5</sup> However, after the intercession of the PAF Commanding General and his Chief of Air Staff, the group surrendered their arms later.

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<sup>4</sup>Daily Report, Asia and Pacific, FBIS, 29 Jan 1987, p. P-1 & P-5.

<sup>5</sup>Daily Report, Asia and Pacific, FBIS, 30 Jan 1987, p. P-14.

The second group which raided Villamor Air Base were defeated and captured. Some 48 hours later, the group which occupied the TV station finally gave up.

It is worthwhile to note that all the leaders of these three groups were all air force officers. The alleged leader of the previous coup attempt which was foiled in November 1986, was a general in the air force and formerly close to the Ex-President. He is also the brother of a leftist rebel leader.

When will another group stage a similar action to disrupt the leadership in the Armed Forces can be as good as anybody's guess. There is a dominant fraternity organization the AFP called the "Guardians Brotherhood". They command some 70% of all the officers and men of the armed forces and this is a force to reckon with.<sup>6</sup> There is another group independent from the former which is composed of officers only. They come from the different branches of service and was instrumental in rallying the military-civilian revolt which toppled the administration of President Marcos in February 1986.

Loyalty of these different groups to the present leadership in the military cannot be ascertained as manifested by recent events that had transpired.

The result of the last referendum which resolved the issue on the new constitution and the legitimacy of the presidency of Mrs. Aquino, showed that the military was not unanimous in approving the new charter. According to reports, 40 percent of the AFP voted "no".<sup>7</sup>

It was also reported that the Defense Minister and the Chief of Staff of the AFP will lead members of the armed forces in a mass ceremony to swear allegiance to the new constitution. But how many among the military are loyal to the constitution and how many are loyal to the persons whom they recognize as their leaders?

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<sup>6</sup>Daily Report, Asia and Pacific, FBIS, 30 Jan 1987, p. P-14.

<sup>7</sup>The Montgomery Advertiser, February 16, 1987, p. 4A.

1. Non-attention to Strategy and Doctrine.

When "Oplan KATATAGAN" was launched by the AFP in the early 80's, it was a strategy aimed to "win the hearts and minds of the people". The objective was to make the military closer to the people but the reverse happened. Had this strategy succeeded, the insurgents would not have grown to its size today, and probably the administration of Ex-President Marcos would still be in power. Instead of winning the hearts and minds of the people, they became alienated from the military and the ruling administration. It was after the assassination of former senator Benigno Aquino (the husband of President Aquino), when the credibility of the military was at its lowest. "Instead of being hailed as a defender, the military was viewed warily."<sup>8</sup>

Again, because of too much politics in the military, tactical objectives were overlooked. In the case of the Air Force, instead of concentrating its efforts towards its role in tactical air, the leadership at that time went to the extent of deviating from its traditional role and even duplicated some functions of other services. A classic example is when the PAF organized, trained and equipped two infantry oriented battalions and subsequently deployed them in the field. This decision affected the manning of other air force units particularly the supporting units.

When this unit was formed, Headquarters, PAF first asked for volunteers. When there were not enough volunteers to fill up the battalion, what headquarters did was to assign a quota to each of the PAF units to contribute to the personnel requirements of this new unit. The contribution was based on the current strength of the unit, so, the bigger the unit, the more personnel it has to release with corresponding grade spread. The units suffered cutback in personnel and no replacement came because higher headquarters never increased

<sup>8</sup>Wall Street Journal, September 3, 1986.



the FAF troop ceiling. This depleted some units with technicians which took them years to train. It also affected the morale of the other service members because it somehow reflected on their performance as an infantry unit.

Very seldom do people in headquarters discuss and evaluate current strategy and doctrine. Little support is also given to the section at headquarters who is suppose to review and rewrite doctrines. Reaction to a certain situation is based on common sense and experience, seldom by the book. There are written doctrines but people are too lazy to read them. It is a common attitude that when they are in the field, the Filipino military men will rely more on individual ability rather than rules on the book.

As I had mentioned earlier, it has been practiced in the field to use the S-76 armed helicopter to direct T-28 air strikes, but this practice has not been reviewed and put into writing.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CONFLICT IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

For a while, the recent ceasefire concluded between the Communists rebels and the government troops gave a breathing spell to both sides and showed some indications of peaceful settlements but due to the stiff demands of the rebels to which the government definitely cannot submit, led to the collapse of the peace talks. The insurgents has resumed hostilities leaving no hope for a peaceful solution to the problem.

The brief lull in fighting gave the insurgents several advantages. For once, they were able to move more freely without being touched or apprehended by government forces. It is also possible that during that period they have moved some of their forces in strategic places so that in case of a signal for an attack, they can easily move and strike at their designated targets. Definitely, the NPAs took advantage of recruiting more members and trained them for any eventualities that will come.

The government, by entertaining the NPA demands to go into negotiations showed sign of weakness which boosted the fighting spirit of the rebels. By bringing the government into the negotiating table, they placed themselves in a bargaining position. Suddenly, their existence as a resistance group was recognized. Now, they will never yield to any pressure or any condition and instead they will continue their struggle which started eighteen years ago.

Guerrilla type of conflict will continue in the countryside and probably will be carried to urban areas in due time because the enemy has gained some support. They will continue subverting government and civilian organizations and for sure will try hard to infiltrate the military and the defense establishment. They will surely take advantage of the current crisis in the AFP.

They will continue to resort to propaganda to discredit the military and harass civilians sympathizing with the military. More ambushes will be staged particularly against government forces. Given the chance, they might turn to foreign assistance who are willing to support their cause.

There is a growing concern regarding the Soviet's "spurious activities in the country" which have been vehemently denied by the USSR ambassador to the Philippines.<sup>9</sup>

If the NPAs is able to obtain arms from the USSR or through his surrogates, PAF air activities can be threatened, especially if they will be supplied with surface to air missiles. PAF pilots are ill-prepared to meet this kind of threat. Never had they experienced being fired upon by surface to air missiles or SAMs nor have had any training on evasive tactics. Even PAF aircraft are not equipped with countermeasures and detecting devices.

The growing influence of the insurgents among the rural folks makes it difficult for pilots to pinpoint targets. It would be difficult to inflict casualties to the enemy without involving or endangering the lives of innocent civilians one the former mixed with the populace. There will be instances where pilots have to make a difficult decision whether to release his loads or not and this will be governed by the policies of the present leadership.

At the rate the NPAs are gaining influence in the countryside, targetting urban centers is a matter of time.

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<sup>9</sup>Daily Report, Asia & Pacific, FBIS, 22 January 1987, p. P-12.

## CHAPTER VI

### WHAT MUST BE DONE

Having identified the problems which confronts current PAF support of the AFP campaign against insurgency, it is high time for the air force leadership to do some serious thinking and examine how the PAF is faring in its support of the units in the field. Do away with the old practice of playing politics and pay attention to factors which will greatly influence the outcome of the operations, such as: logistics, communications, security, intelligence, command and control. Further, it is imperative to restudy current doctrines and tactics so that they can be adapted to current operations.

One way of improving PAF air support to the RUCs is to do away with the CASFs. As pointed out earlier, the concept of providing air elements to each RUC by organizing the CASFs, scattered the meager resources of the PAF. While it satisfies the Air Force presence in the area, the effectiveness of the support it is giving to the RUCs is very much wanting, especially in areas where operations are frequently conducted. Two or three helicopters are not adequate to support the demands of an Army Brigade when all its battalions are out operating in the field, more so when there are other units in support of the brigade. Presently, in order for the FIC commander to get augmentation aircraft in his AOR, he has to plan his operations so many days ahead because he has to pass his request for additional aircraft all the way up to General Headquarters, AFP. It takes quite some time for such request to be processed and by the time the PAF can send the additional aircraft, the situation in the area could have changed already. In case of requests for air strikes by the T-28s, he will have to give enough lead time for the deployment of these aircraft because they are not in the area. They have to be moved from their home station together with the air munitions and support personnel of the element.

Additional fuel will also have to be prepositioned before the aircraft arrive.

When an operation is conducted involving T-28 air strikes of at least four ships, the 15th Strike Wing normally designates a ranking officer to take charge of the group and reports directly to the RUC commander from whom he gets his mission briefing. He practically over shadows the CASF commander in the area especially if he outranks the latter. This is also true to other units when they deploy a bigger number of aircraft in an area.

By consolidating air force assets in three or four CASFs and locating them in a main operating base (MOB), most of the problems in logistics, security, communications and command and control can be alleviated or minimized.

A Task Force or a Composite Group can be organized to exercise command and control over these air elements in the area and the designated commander, who should be at least a rated colonel, will be responsible in providing adequate air support to RUCs within his AOR. Lines of communications can be established between his headquarters and the RUC headquarters so that immediate requests for air support can be acted upon with minimum time. Former CASF commanders can be designated as air liaison officers to the RUCs. All the resources of the CASFs will be absorbed by the Task Force. The Task Force commander can be given authority to deal directly with commanders of resource units if he needs additional aircraft and the necessary support and logistics that goes with it. Headquarters, PAF will just be dealing with probably four or five Task Force commanders instead of the 13 CASF commanders. In short, span of control is reduced. Aircraft deployed in the area will not have to be flown to home base for maintenance especially the helicopters. This will mean savings on fuel which can be used instead to support field operations. At the same time conserving aircraft time. Maintenance teams can be rotated by their respective flying units at the MOB. The same arrangement can be done with the crews. Only aircraft scheduled to undergo field level or depot level maintenance.

nance will be flown to home base with a replacement. Fuel supply will be consolidated in the MOB and secured. It will be the discretion of the Task Force commander to preposition fuel as may be required by the tactical situation in coordination with field commanders. The Task Force commander will be responsible in determining priorities in close air support. Aircraft can be deployed to tactical units when conducting operations and they will recover at their MOB after the mission so that field commanders cannot overuse or misuse air assets.

Aircraft can be secured better at the MOB because they can be sheltered and guards can be posted in a 24-hour period. In case of positive threat by the enemy, the Task Force commander can ask for reinforcements from the security units of the PAF. This can justify the continuous existence of the two infantry battalions the PAF has organized recently. They can be employed to provide security to the Task Forces once the CASFs are deactivated.

Along the same line of thinking, the budget programmed to support the CASFs can be consolidated and realigned to support the creation of the Task Forces. Duplication of equipment and personnel can be avoided and maintenance of infrastructures can be reduced.

The sizes and locations of the Task Forces can be determined by the PAF depending on the type and volume of support that it envisions to provide to the RUCs in their respective AOR.

As soon as the situation stabilizes, these Task Forces can be dissolved and the personnel and resources can revert to their former units.

In treating the present handicap in communications, particularly air to ground, I recommend that the PAF should start phasing out the old communications sets and program a replacement compatible to those used by the operating units in the field. Training and exercises should be scheduled more often jointly so that when these forces go into actual operations, coordination can be done much better.

Old and aging communications sets must be discarded because they maybe costlier to maintain aside from the fact that most of the spare parts are hard to find in the market. Modern communication systems are easier to maintain and handle because they are light and compact as a result of recent technology development.

Even communications in the field has to be replaced with much reliable and sturdier sets. As emphasized in FM 100-5, US Army, "Reliable communications are the heart of command and control".<sup>10</sup>

If we are giving much importance to logistics and communications as determinants in the success of operations, we should treat intelligence in the same manner. In my opinion, PAF intelligence is spending more time doing the job of ground intelligence rather than concentrate their efforts to air intelligence. They should be more aggressive in gathering essential information related to the operations in the field such as locating targets and pinpointing hostile otherwise friendly territories to be fed to pilots operating in the area. They should establish more contacts with friendly civilians and reward them appropriately depending on the reliability of the information. They should acquire new equipment for photo-reconnaissance and be able to interpret the results for the consumption of commanders in the field. If there are personnel conducting civic action projects in an area, they should be able to tie-up with them in order to gather essential information which could be of importance to current operations. There should be continuous training of intelligence personnel particularly in studying the tactics of the enemy.

All these things that I have mentioned cannot be put to action if there is no cohesiveness and entire cooperation among the leadership and the people composing the PAF. For as long as divisiveness and factionalism exist, the

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<sup>10</sup> FM 100-5, May 1986, Chapter 3, p. 52.

leadership of the command is threatened and the mission stands to be jeopardized. To prevent factionalism, the command should not authorize the formation of groups or organizations within the PAF which can undermine the duties and responsibilities of a soldier much more so his loyalty to command and its duly constituted authorities. The PAF leadership should venture towards professionalizing every member in the command. This could be started by reviewing and implementing the sound policies on assignments, promotions, education, training, rewards and compensation, and the basic needs of each and every member of the organization. Retrain and re-orient personnel who have forgotten the duties and responsibilities of a basic soldier and do away with the misfits and scalawags in the service. Punish those who violate rules and regulations and give rewards to those who are deserving. Discourage favoritism, instead, encourage equal treatment and equal opportunity for everybody. Leaders in the PAF should set first the good example for others to emulate.

In the past few months, the NPAs had shown aggressiveness and boldness in their harassment of both government troops and civilians. We must be able to recognize and study their tactics, in turn, we should be able to adopt counter measures to be used against them. By the same token, we must be able to vary our own modus operandi so that the enemy will not have a chance to counter them. This calls for a review of present strategy and doctrine. In the past, little attention has been given to strategy and doctrine. Very few learn a lesson from past experiences of others simply because they have not been written or disseminated. Most of the problems I have discussed if not all, boils down to inadequacy of written doctrine. If the PAF has to start from the very beginning to be able to solve its current deficiencies, it has to review its basic doctrine. I believe it is not too late to pay more attention to doctrines in order to maintain a strong and effective Air Force.

I honestly believe that the present leadership in the PAF is very much



willing to undergo the necessary changes in order to develop a strong air arm to defeat the insurgents.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

Stability in the Philippines hinges so much on the ability of the armed forces to cope with the growing insurgency threat. As in the past, much is expected from the Philippine Air Force, especially its capability to provide adequate air support to units in the fields.

In the preceding discussions, I have pointed out certain deficiencies which requires immediate attention by the present leadership in the Air Force. Allowing them to exist without positive corrections, may result to serious setbacks in operations against the insurgents.

In summary, I have addressed the problems on logistics, security, command, control and communications, divisiveness among members of the command and the importance of doctrines.

As a major point of this paper, I have proposed the abolition of the CASFs which serve as the direct link of the PAF's air support to the different RUCs. As a consequence, I advocated for the creation of four or five Task Forces which can be strategically located throughout the country with defined ACR. Consolidating the resources of three or more CASFs into a Task Force means concentration of a stronger force and centralization of air assets and the command and control and communications required in its operations. Security of the aircraft can be better assured and unnecessary use of aircraft can be avoided thereby conserving flying time for a more productive mission.

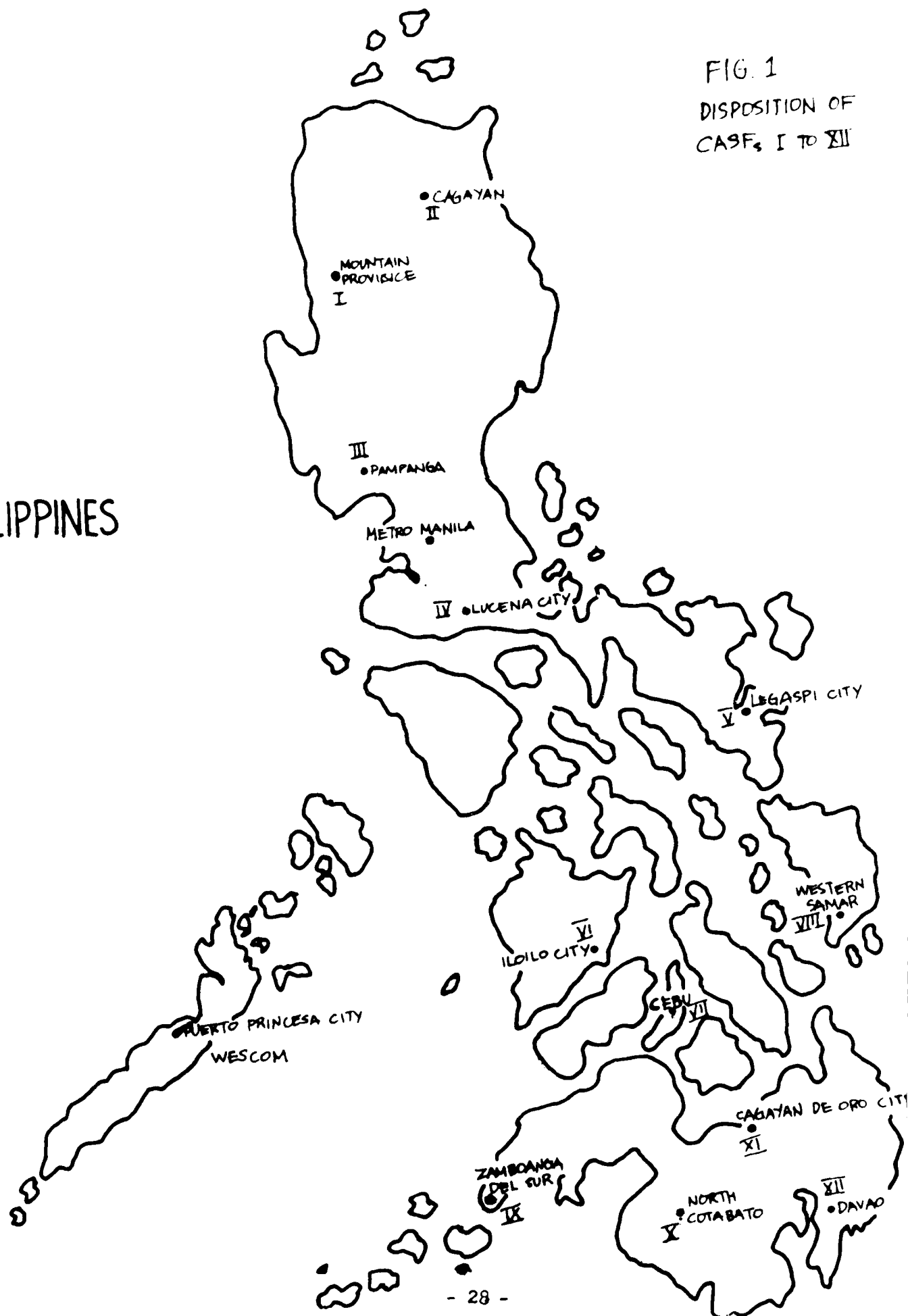
I have proposed possible solutions to other problems which I have identified and it is up to the present leadership to evaluate these solutions. I hope that in the course of attending to these problems, the PAF leadership will spend some time to review current PAF doctrines so that they will realize whether these doctrines still adopt to the needs of the present operations or not.

I can foresee no clear sign of peace in the near future, rather I expect intensification of conflict. Recent activities of the enemy against government forces indicates that they are determined to carry on their struggle. We should not under estimate the capability of the enemy. I also hope that no foreign assistance will come to the aid of the insurgents because should that happen, the future will be bleak for the Filipino people.

The FAF leadership should therefore aim towards building a strong Air Force capable of meeting any threat particularly the growing insurgency problem in the country.

FIG. 1  
DISPOSITION OF  
CASE, I TO XII

PHILIPPINES



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